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## Four MPs barred from the UK for 'visa fraud'

Wednesday 26th April , 2017 9:42 am



Parliament of Ghana

The British government has blacklisted three current serving Members of Parliament (MP) and a former MP from entering the UK for indulging in visa fraud.

A confidential letter the British High Commission in Ghana wrote to the Speaker of Parliament, Prof. Aaron Mike Oquaye and sighted by **citifmonline.com** accused the MPs of facilitating the entry of some of their relatives to the UK using their Diplomatic Passports.

According to the letter, the MPs left these relatives to live in the UK illegally.

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The letter cited Richard Acheampong, MP for Bia East in the Western Region, Joseph Benhazin Dahah, MP for Asutifi North in the Brong Ahafo region, Johnson Kwaku Adu, MP for Ahafo Ano South West, in the Ashanti Region and George Boakye, former MP for Asunafo South in the Brong Ahafo region for engaging in the fraudulent act.

"The British High Commission considers the actions completely unacceptable. In some cases these behaviors may arguably be criminal in nature," the British High Commission noted.

The British High Commission further informed the Speaker that it "will henceforth only entertain and prioritize requests for visas from MPs, if they are made through the parliamentary protocol office who should verify that there is an official, parliamentary reason for the proposed visit."

Three of the four, George Boakye, Johnson Kwaku Adu and Joseph Benhazin Dahah are members of the Majority in Parliament and the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP) while Richard Acheampong is a member of the opposition National Democratic Congress and the Minority.

This action by the British High Commission against the MPs is the first of such by any embassy or high commission in Ghana.

There has however been concern about the issuance of Diplomatic Passports to certain individuals in Ghana.

#### **Below is the full letter from the British High Commission:**

Dear Mr Speaker.

The British High Commission (BHC) would like, in confidence, to bring the following matters to your attention, regarding the apparent involvement of three serving MPs and one former MP in visa fraud directly affecting the United Kingdom.

In doing so, we note the powerful words in your impressive inaugural address as Speaker, to the effect that, for Members of Parliament, holding a Diplomatic Passport is both a privilege and responsibility which should not be abused: and that those who abused that trust would be appropriately dealt with.

In that regard:

1. On 11/09/2012, the then Honourable and now former MP for Asunafo South George BOAKYE applied for visas for himself and his 37-year old daughter, Joyce BOAKYE to visit a friend in London for 17 days. The visas were granted on 14/09/2012. On 17/01/2013 Joyce BOAKYE travelled to the UK with her Honourable father. Joyce BOAKYE did not leave the UK with her father, but remained until 06/01/2017. In other words, she finally returned to Ghana just this month, having been in the UK illegally for over three years, and only then at our strong urging of Mr Boakye to bring her back. Mr Boakye is highly unlikely to be issued any further visas to visit the UK in the next ten years for his role in facilitating his daughter's travel to the UK, including should he be re-elected to Parliament in a subsequent election.
2. On 27/11/2015 the Honourable MP for Bia East Richard ACHEAMPONG applied for a UK visa using Diplomatic Passport number DX001490. The Hon ACHEAMPONG stated in his application form that he would travel to the UK for a two week holiday with his "wife" Esther TIWAA. On 10/12/2015 Mr

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ACHEAMPONG and Ms TIWAA were issued with UK visas. On 24/12/2015 Esther TIWAA travelled to the UK, but alone: the Hon ACHEAMPONG did not accompany her as both his and her visa applications said that he would. She has not left the UK since that time, and is therefore now there illegally. The Hon ACHEAMPONG did not declare the illegal presence of his wife in the UK until he was challenged with the facts by us on 10/10/2016. He then repeatedly promised me personally that he would bring documentation to prove that Esther TIWAA was, indeed, his wife, but has consistently failed to do so. Neither has he been prepared to share any useful information to help us track down Ms TIWAA's current whereabouts. Should Mr ACHEAMPONG now apply for another UK visa at any point up until 08/12/2025 his previous actions with regard to Esther TIWAA will weigh heavily against his application and he is likely to be refused.

3. On 06/04/2016, the Honourable MP for Ntotroso, Joseph Benhazin DAHAH applied for a UK visa using Diplomatic Passport number DX001459 to go on a two week holiday. The Hon DAHAH stated that he was travelling with his wife Gloria DANSU and his niece Beatrice MENSAH. On 11/04/2016 the visas of the Hon DAHAH and Gloria DANSU were issued; the visa of his niece Beatrice MENSAH was refused. On 13/05/2016 the Hon DAHAH applied in another country for a visa to travel to the Republic of Ireland with his wife and daughter. The identity of his wife had changed from Gloria DANSU in the UK application to Ruyling APPAU in the Irish one. More significantly, a birth certificate was submitted showing that Beatrice MENSAH was now his daughter and not his niece as she had been described when applying to visit the UK. The Hon DAHAH's UK visa was cancelled and a 10-year UK visa ban has been imposed on him. He has been informed of this.

4. On 20/06/2016 the Honourable MP for Ahafo Ano South West, Johnson Kwaku ADU applied for visas for himself, his wife Grace YEBOAH and their 16-year old daughter Emmanuella ADU in order to visit London for a ten day holiday. The Hon ADU applied using Diplomatic Passport number DX002267; all three visas were granted on 07/07/2016. The family of three travelled to the UK on 25/07/2016. The Hon ADU left the UK just two days later on 27/07/2016 leaving behind his wife and child, if that indeed is what they are, who have not left the UK to date and are therefore now illegally resident there. This is in some ways the most serious of the cases outlined in this letter, given the possibility that Hon ADU knowingly facilitated the movement of a minor – who cannot currently be traced – into the United Kingdom. That has been noted with alarm by UK authorities.

The British High Commission considers the actions outlined above to be completely unacceptable. In some cases, these behaviours may arguably be criminal in nature. As already outlined, administrative measures have been taken to ensure that the Honourable members mentioned here will most likely not be granted visas for the UK within the next 10 years. I should add that the Party affiliation of these MPs is, in this context, irrelevant to us: we simply state the facts as we have discovered them.

We are continuing to investigate whether any other current or former MPs have engaged in similar behaviour and will inform you, if we discover any further such cases.

Furthermore, the British High Commission has information that points strongly to some of the aforementioned Honourable members having used the same unofficial visa agent (also known as a 'Goro boy') in their applications, specifically a gentleman called Appiah. We are sure that Mr Speaker shares our

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view that an institution as respected and vitally important as the Ghanaian Parliament should not be a location where unregistered visa agents approach Honourable Members and act as a conduit for them to participate in visa fraud. The British High Commission will happily cooperate fully with any parliamentary and law enforcement investigation into such agents operating in the vicinity of the Ghanaian Parliament.

Given what has transpired, the British High Commission would request the Ghanaian Parliament to be aware of the following:

- a) we will henceforth only entertain and prioritise requests for visas from MPs, if they are made through the parliamentary protocol office who should verify that there is an official, parliamentary reason for the proposed visit;
- b) however, MPs wishing to make private visits to the UK or to be accompanied on official visits by non-official relatives must apply online and through our Visa Application Centre at the Movenpick Hotel like any other applicant;
- c) could you kindly confirm whether and why it is legitimate for ex-MPs to continue to possess and use diplomatic passports, in some cases for many years after they have ceased to be parliamentarians? In that regard, we would humbly like to ask, Mr Speaker, what procedures are in place to ensure that diplomatic passports are removed forthwith from all those 133 former Members who have just ceased to be MPs?
- d) the net effect of such visa fraud by a very few Honourable MPs as outlined in this letter is to raise the bar of suspicion against all such applicants, which is of course regrettably to the huge disadvantage of those very many MPs who do act honourably at all times.

The British High Commission looks forward to a constructive relationship with yourself, your officers and the new Parliament in general and on specific issues, such as the work currently being sponsored by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to bolster Parliament's research capacities. We hope, at the same time, that measures taken by us all collectively will prevent any repeat of the sort of cases described in this letter. We would warmly welcome your views on the issues raised in this letter, both in regards to the specific cases and generic issues.

I am copying this letter to your Protocol Office, and to the Executive Secretary and Chief-of-Staff to the His Excellency President; and to the Ministers-designate of Foreign Affairs and National Security. We are also circulating this letter widely to other Diplomatic Missions which issue visas in Ghana in the expectation that some of them will consider similar action to ourselves against the above-named individuals.

May I take this opportunity to repeat to you assurances of our very high regard for you and your office; and to wish you, Mr Speaker, every success in your new role. Please be assured of our commitment to collaborate with you, and through you with Parliament, wherever we can usefully be of assistance.

Signed,

Jon Benjamin

British High Commissioner

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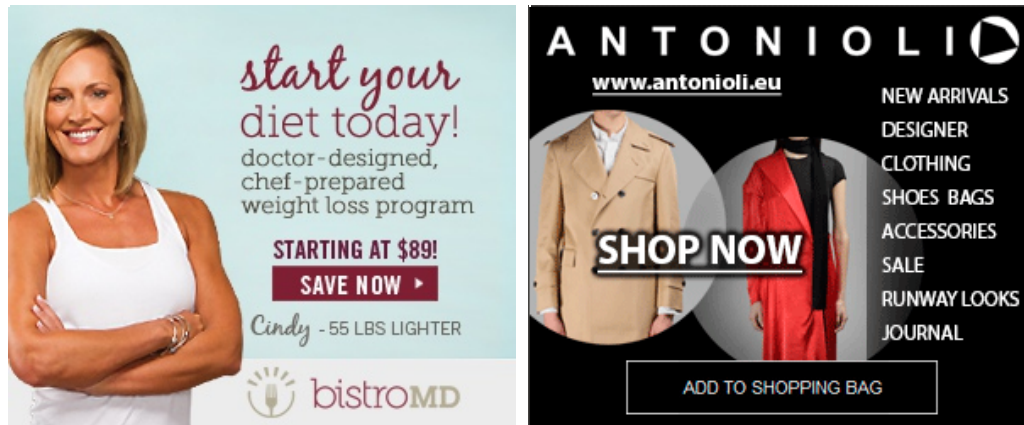
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